

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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AMEMBASSY CAIRO
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SUBJ: SYRIAN COLUMNIST SPECULATES ON RECENT PLO-JORDANIAN CONTACTS

REF: DAMASCUS 0395

1. SUMMARY: COLUMNIST SPECULATED IN JAN 20 AL-BAATH THAT
INCLUSION HANI AL-HASAN ON RECENT PLO DELEGATION VISITING
AMMAN SIGNALLED SERIOUS PLO EFFORT FOR RECONCILIATION WITH
JORDAN. POSSIBILITY RAISED THAT AL-HASAN HAS HELD PREVIOUS
SECRET MEETING WITH JORDANIAN OFFICIALS PRIOR TO THIS VISIT.
ASSERTING THAT DEBATE AND DIALOGUE AMONG PALESTINIANS
NECESSARY FOR ACHIEVING RELATIONS BETWEEN PLO AND JORDAN,
COLUMNIST ISSUED WARNING AGAINST THOSE WHO WOULD TRY TO
DISRUPT PORCESS. SAME COLUMNIST HAS PREVIOUSLY WRITTEN
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SEVERAL PIECES ON PALESTINIANS WHICH REFLECTED SARG POLICY.
END SUMMARY.

2. JAN 20 AL-BAATH COLUMN SPECULATED THAT RECENT MEETING
BETWEEN PLO OFFICIALS HANI AL-HASAN AND KING HUSSEIN MIGHT
NOT HAVE BEEN FIRST SUCH MEETING BETWEEN AL-HASAN AND JORDANIAN
OFFICIALS. COLUMNIST MUHAMMAD ABU ISSAH POINTED OUT THAT

IN RECENT WEEKS SPECULATION HAS ARISEN DURING VISITS OF ABU MAYZAR AND OTHER PLO OFFICIALS WHO ATTENDED VARIOUS INTERNATIONAL OR INTER-ARAB CONFERENCES IN AMMAN THAT CONTACTS WERE TAKING PLACE BETWEEN THEM AND JORDANIAN OFFICIALS TO REESTABLISH RELATIONS.

3. COLUMNIST NOTED THAT PROMINENT PLO DELEGATION HEADED BY KHALED FAHUM AND A NUMBER OF OTHER PLO OFFICIALS ATTENDED FIFTH SESSION OF THE ARAB PARLIAMENTARY UNION. HE SAW GREAT SIGNIFICANCE IN INCLUSION IN DELEGATION OF HANI AL-HASAN "WHOM AGENCIES IDENTIFY AS ARAFAT'S POLITICAL COUNSELOR." COLUMNIST NOTED CREDIBILITY GIVEN SUCH SPECULATION BY ABSENCE OF AL-HASAN FROM ALL BUT SHORT PART OF FINAL APU SESSION.

4. RE ACKNOWLEDGED MEETING FAHUM AND AL-HASAN HELD WITH KING HUSSEIN JAN 19, COLUMNIST NOTED THAT MEMBERS OF THE DELEGATION ASSURED HIM DISCUSSION OF RESTORATION PLO-JORDANIAN RELATIONS WAS NOT PREVIOUSLY ON THE AGENDA AND THAT NO RESOLUTIONS IN THIS REGARD HAD BEEN PASSED BY PLO EXCOMM OR CENTRAL COUNCIL. COLUMNIST CLAIMED HE UNDERSTOOD MEETING WAS ARRANGED WHEN FAHUM ATTENDED RECEPTION AT PALACE ALONG WITH OTHER HEADS OF APU DELEGATIONS AT WHICH HUSSEIN INDICATED WISH TO MEET HIM AT NOON FOLLOWING DAY. FAHUM SAID TO HAVE REQUESTED THAT HANI AL-HASAN ACCOMPANY HIM, TO WHICH KING CONCURRED.

5. COLUMNIST THEN ASKED RHETORICALLY WHETHER AL-HASAN HAD CARRIED CONCRETE IDEAS TO MEETING AND WAS HOPING FOR SUCH AN OPPORTUNITY ALL ALONG, OR IF VISIT WAS MERELY EXCHANGE OF "USUAL COURTESIES?" HE FURTHER ASKED IF THIS FIRST SUCH LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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MEETING AL-HASAN HAD HELD WITH JORDANIAN OFFICIALS OR WHETHER IT INTENDED TO "CROWN PREVIOUS ONES." COLUMNIST THEN DECLARED THAT PLO HAS RIGHT TO HOLD ANY CONTACTS IT DEEMS BENEFICIAL TO ITS OBJECTIVES. HE ASSERTED THAT ISRAEL ONLY PARTY WHICH OBJECTED TO SUCH CONTACTS AND TRIED TO CAST DOUBT ON JORDAN'S ADHERENCE TO RABAT RESOLUTION DECLARING PLO AS SOLE REP OF THE PALESTINIANS.

6. COLUMNIST STATED THAT EVENTS OF 1970-71 IN JORDAN WERE POINT OF CONTENTION WHICH ALL PARTIES AVOIDED IN DISCUSSION BECAUSE "IT STUCK IN THE THROAT LIKE GLASS SPLINTERS." HE DECLARED THAT RESTORATION OF HISTORICAL BONDS BETWEEN JORDANIAN AND PALESTINIAN PEOPLES WAS A NECESSITY BUT THAT RELATIONS WITH JORDAN COULD NOT RAPIDLY IMPROVE OR WORSEN BECAUSE DIALOGUE AND DEBATE WERE INEVITABLE FOR THE PROCESS; FIRST AMONG PALESTINIANS AND LATER BETWEEN THE PALESTINIANS AND JORDANIANS. EDITORIAL CONCLUDED WITH WARNING AGAINST THOSE WHO MISUNDERSTAND THE NEED FOR SUCH DIALOGUE AND DEBATE AND WHO TRIED TO SOW DOUBT ABOUT THE INTENTIONS OF THOSE WHO UNDERTAKE SUCH

INITIATIVES.

7. COMMENT: THE SAME COLUMNIST HAS WRITTEN SEVERAL IMPORTANT EDITORIALS LATE LAST YEAR WHICH RECEIVED WIDESPREAD COVERAGE IN BEIRUT PRESS AS IMPORTANT INDICATION SARG THINKING ON PLO QUESTION. WOULD APPEAR THIS COLUMN FURTHER INDICATION SARG WISHES TO ENCOURAGE MOVEMENT ON JORDANIAN-PALESTINIAN RECONCILIATION AND WARN THOSE IN PLO WHO WISH TO SABOTAGE SUCH INITIATIVES.

MURPHY

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